

May 1, 2008

Congress Approves BILL TO PREVENT GENETIC DISCRIMINATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Saying "new discoveries in medicine ought to help people, not hurt them," Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) voted today to approve a bill that prohibits health insurance companies and employers from discriminating against people on the basis of genetic test results.

"Advances in our understanding of genetics are transforming medical science. But with this new information comes the real danger that insurance providers or employers could discriminate against people based on their genetic predisposition to some disease," said Obey. "This bill is intended to prevent that. People shouldn't have to be afraid that their genetic composition could ever result in the loss of a job or their health insurance."

To prevent the improper use of genetic information and remove barriers that prevent or discourage patients from seeking tests necessary for early treatment and prevention of diseases and conditions with a genetic component, GINA - the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act - prohibits:

- group health plans and health insurers from canceling, denying, refusing to renew, or changing the terms or premiums of coverage based solely on an individual's genetic predisposition to developing a disease in the future.

- employers from using individuals' genetic information when making hiring, firing, promotion and other employment-related decisions.

- health insurers and employers from *requiring* genetic tests.

In addition to strong public support, GINA is also supported by more than 500 organizations, including the Coalition for Genetic Fairness, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Medical Association, American Nurses Association, American Public Health Association, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, and the Personalized Medicine Coalition.

###